

Message Text

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ACTION EUR-12

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 CIAE-00 DODE-00 PM-05 H-01 INR-10
L-03 NSAE-00 NSC-05 PA-01 SP-02 SS-15 ICA-11
MCT-01 TRSE-00 /067 W
-----055551 141752Z /45

P R 141630Z JUN 78
FM AMEMBASSY ROME
TO SECSTATE WASHDC PRIORITY 3562
INFO AMCONSUL FLORENCE
AMCONSUL GENOA
AMCONSUL MILAN
AMCONSUL NAPLES
AMCONSUL PALERMO
AMCONSUL TRIESTE POUCH
AMCONSUL TURIN POUCH

C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 1 OF 2 ROME 11070

E.O. 11652 GDS
TAGS: PINT, IT
SUBJECT: ANDREOTTI NAMES ROGNONI TO INTERIOR MINISTRY

SUMMARY: IN AN UNEXPECTED MOVE, PRIME MINISTER ANDREOTTI ENDED A POLITICALLY DIFFICULT 34-DAY SEARCH FOR A NEW INTERIOR MINISTER ON JUNE 13 BY NOMINATING DC DEPUTY VIRGINIO ROGONI, A VICE PRESIDENT OF THE CHAMBER OF DEPUTIES. UNKNOWN OUTSIDE OF PARLIAMENTARY CIRCLES, ROGONI IS A UNIVERSITY PROFESSOR FROM PAVIA (LOBARDY) WHO IS A MEMBER OF THE DC'S LEFT WING WHICH LENDS ANDREOTTI AND THE ZACCAGNINI SECRETARIAT POLITICAL SUPPORT. INTELLIGENT, RESERVED AND UNCONTROVERSIAL, ROGNONI NONETHELESS TAKES ON THE SENSITIVE AND POLITICALLY HAZARDOUS INTERIOR PORTFOLIO WITHOUT ANY PREVIOUS EXECUTIVE GOVERNMENT EXPERIENCE. HE WILL BE CALLED UPON TO LEAD THE ANTI-TERRORIST EFFORT, REORGANIZE THE DISPIRITED INTELLIGENCE AND SECURITY FORCES AND NEGOTIATE POLITICALLY SENSITIVE

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ISSUES SUCH AS THE POLICE UNION. IN MAKING THE APPOINTMENT, ANDREOTTI TOOK A NEW STEP BY REQUESTING AND OBTAINING FOR THE FIRST TIME THE PRIOR CONCURRENCE OF THE FIVE PARTIES (INCLUDING THE PCI) WHICH SUPPORT HIS GOVERNMENT. END SUMMARY.

1. ENDING A PROTRACTED SEARCH FOR A WILLING AND

POLITICALLY ACCEPTABLE CANDIDATE TO REPLACE FORMER INTERIOR MINISTER COSSIGA, PRIME MINISTER ANDREOTTI NOMINATED A RELATIVELY UNKNOWN DC DEPUTY, VIRGINIO ROGNONI, TO THE KEY SECURITY POST ON JUNE 13. NAMING A NEW INTERIOR MINISTER WAS NO EASY TASK. THE PORTFOLIO WOULD NORMALLY HAVE BEEN CONSIDERED A POLITICAL PLUM RESERVED FOR SENIOR POLITICAL LEADERS. IN A PERIOD OF TERRORISM AND DISORDER, HOWEVER, THE SENSITIVE POSITION HAS BECOME POLITICALLY HAZARDOUS. MOREOVER,, THE NOMINATION OF A SENIOR DC LEADER (SUCH AS PICCOLI OR RUFFINI) WOULD HAVE UPSET THE PATY'S DELICATE INTERNAL BALANCE IN A MOMENT ALREADY STRAINED BY POST-MORO LEADERSHIP MANEUVERING. ANDREOTTI WAS THEREFORE OBLIGED TO LOOK FOR SUITABLE CANDIDATES AT AN UNUSUALLY JUNIOR LEVEL.

2. A SECOND PROBLEM IN NAMING A NEW INTERIOR MINISTER AROSE FROM ANDREOTTI'S DECISION TO OBTAIN THE CONCURRENCE OF THE FIVE PARTIES (THE PCI INCLUDED) THAT SPPORT HIS GOVERNMENT ON THE ACCEPTABILITY OF THE CANDIDATE. THIS IS SOMETHING THAT ANDREOTTI HAS NEVER DONE BEFORE BUT APPARENTLY HE REGARDED AS POLITICALLY NECESSARY AT THIS TIME. THUS, THE NAMES OF NUMEROUS CANDIDATES WERE FLOATED, ONLY TO BE KNOCKED DOWN AS UNACCEPTABLE TO ONE OR MORE OF THE POLITICAL PARTIES. THE CANDIDACY OF FORMER INTERIOR

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UNDERSECRETARY AND FRIULI SPECIAL COMMISSIONER ZAMBERLETTI APPEARED THE MST PROMISING UNTIL THE LEFT PARTIES JUDGED HIM UNACCEPTABLE. ROGNONI, IN THE END, WON THE CONSENSUS OF THE FIVE PARTIES.

3. ROGNONI THE MAN: THE NEW INTERIOR MINISTER TAKES ON WHAT MUST CERTAINLY BE ONE OF THE TOUGHEST AND MOST POLITIALLY SENSITIVE MINISTERIAL ASSIGNMENTS WITHOUT ANY PREVIOUS EXECUTIVE GOVERNMENT EXPERIENCE. MOREOVER, IN HIS TEN YEAR POLITIAL CAREER WHICH BEGAN WITH HIS ELECTION TO PARLIAMENT IN 1968, HE HAS HAD NO ASSOCIATION WITH THE POLICE OR SECURITY FORCES. WE KNOW ROGNONI, HOWEVER, AS AN INTELLIGNT AND SERIOUS MAN WHOSE INTEGRITY AND HONESTY APPEAR UNQUESTIONED. THESES ARE QUALITIES THAT SHOULD ASSIST HIM IN LEARNING THE ROPES IN HIS NEW JOB.

4. BORN AT CORSICO NEAR MILAN ON AUGUST 5, 1924,

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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 2 OF 2 ROME 11070

RIGNINI WAS RAISED IN THE LOBARDY CITY OF PAVIA WHERE
HIS FATHER PRACTICED LAW. AFTER COMPLETING HIS EDUCA-
TION, WHICH INCLUDED A PERIOD AT YALE UNIVERSITY,

ROGNONI PRACTICED LAW IN PAVIA AND TAUGHT PROCEDURAL
LAW AS A PROFESSOR AT TH UNIVERSITY OF PAVIA. HE
ENTERED DC POLITICS AS A MEMBER OF THE LEFT WING
"BASE"FACTION THAT HAS LONG DOMINATED DC POLITICS IN
LOMBARDY. SUPPORTED BY LOBARDY "BASE" LEADERS SUCH
AS BASSETTI, GRANELLI AND MARCORA, ROGNONI WON
ELECTION TO THE HCAMBER OF DEPUTIES IN 1968, 1972 AND
1976. ALTHOUGH HE SERVED AS A VICE PRESIDENT OF THE
DC PARLIAMENTARY GROUP, HE NEVER PALYED A POLITICALLY
PROMINENT ROLE, AND HIS ELECTION IN 1976 AS ONE OF
THE FOUR PRESIDENTS OF THE CHAMBER (POLITICALLY
DISTRIBUTED)MOTE REFLECTED HIS STEADINESS AND COM-
PETENCE RATHER THAN POLITICAL VERVE. IN THE CHAMBER,
ROGNONI HAS ALSO SERVED ON EDUCATION AND FINE ARTS
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COMMITTEE. ROGONI IS MARRIED AND HAS FOUR CHILDREN
(A YEAR AGO HE ADOPTED A PHYSICALLY HADNICAPPED CHILD).
AS A RESULT OF HIS US EDUCATIIONAL EXPERIENCE,

ROGNONI SPEAKS GOOD ENGLISH.

5. ORGNONI'S POLITICS: ALTHOUGH ROGNONI BELONGS TO THE DC'S LEFT WING WHICH SUPPORTS ANDREOTTI AND THE ZACCAGNINI GOVERNMENT, WE HAVE LITTLE KNOWLEDGE OF HIS VIEWS ON SPECIFIC ISSUES. AT A LUNCH AT THE DCM'S RESIDENCE LAST FALL, ROGNONI SUPPORTED MORO'S STRATEGY OF POLITICAL COOPERATION WITH THE PCI. HIS VIEWS AP-PEARED CONSISTENT WITH THE "BASE"FACTION'S MORE OPEN, "POSSIBILIST" ATTITUDE TOWARD THE PCI. ROGNONI HAS RARELY ENTERED THE POLITICAL FRAY, HOWEVER. A RARE EXCEPTION OCCURED DURING LAST WINTER'S GOVERNMENT CRISIS WHEN HE SUPPORTED ANDREOTTI BY CRITICIZING THE DC REFORM GROUP OF 100. WE ALSO KNOW LITTLE OF ROGNONI'S ATTITUDES TOWARD THE UNITED STATES. HE APPEARS TO SHARE GRANELLI'S THIRD WORLDIST PENCHANT; IN 1976 HE ACCEPTED ELECTION TO THE DIRECTORATE OF THE PCI-DOMINATED "ITALY-USSR FRIENDSHIP ASSOCIATION". HE VISITED THE USSR IN 1977 IN THAT CAPACITY.

6. COMMENT. ROGNONI'S APPOINTMENT HAS BEEN WELL RECEIVED EMPHASIZED HIS SERIOUS, BALANCED NATURE AND HIS UNCONTROVERSIAL BACKGROUND. OTHERS OBSERVE THAT BY APPOINTING A MEMBER OF THE "BASIC"FACTION, ANDREOTTI WAS ABLE TO PRESERVE THE FACTIONAL BALANCE OF HIS CABINET (COSSIGA WAS ALSO "BASE"). WE WOULD ADD THAT IN APPOINTING ROGNONI, ANDREOTTI HAS OBTAINED AN INTERIOR MINISTER WHO, LIKE COSSIGA, IS IKELY TO BE ABLE TO DEVELOP A SMOOTH WORKING RELATIONSHIP WITH THE PCI. PCI. ROGNONI'S JUNIOR POLITICAL STANDING MAY ALSO

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PERMIT ANDREOTTI TO EXERCISE A GREATER DEGREE OF INFLUENCE OVER THE INTERIOR MINISTERY THAN NORMALLY WOULD HAVE BEEN THE CASE. FINALLY, ALTHOUGH IT IS CERTAINLY UNDERSTANDABLE THAT ANDREOTTI CONSULTED THE OTHER PARTIES DIRECTLY ON THE APPOINTMENT, THE PRIME MINISTER HAS CONCEDED AN IMPORTANT PRINCIPLE IN PERMITTING THE PARTIES TO PASS ON MINISTERIAL APPOINTMENTS.HOLMES

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Message Attributes

Automatic Decaptioning: X
Capture Date: 01 jan 1994
Channel Indicators: n/a
Current Classification: UNCLASSIFIED
Concepts: PRIME MINISTER, CABINET, BIOGRAPHIC INFORMATION, PERSONNEL APPOINTMENTS
Control Number: n/a
Copy: SINGLE
Draft Date: 14 jun 1978
Decaption Date: 01 jan 1960
Decaption Note:
Disposition Action: RELEASED
Disposition Approved on Date:
Disposition Case Number: n/a
Disposition Comment: 25 YEAR REVIEW
Disposition Date: 20 Mar 2014
Disposition Event:
Disposition History: n/a
Disposition Reason:
Disposition Remarks:
Document Number: 1978ROME11070
Document Source: CORE
Document Unique ID: 00
Drafter: n/a
Enclosure: n/a
Executive Order: GS
Errors: N/A
Expiration:
Film Number: D780248-1003
Format: TEL
From: ROME
Handling Restrictions: n/a
Image Path:
ISecure: 1
Legacy Key: link1978/newtext/t19780660/aaaabzqt.tel
Line Count: 214
Litigation Code IDs:
Litigation Codes:
Litigation History:
Locator: TEXT ON-LINE, ON MICROFILM
Message ID: d16a3289-c288-dd11-92da-001cc4696bcc
Office: ACTION EUR
Original Classification: CONFIDENTIAL
Original Handling Restrictions: n/a
Original Previous Classification: n/a
Original Previous Handling Restrictions: n/a
Page Count: 4
Previous Channel Indicators: n/a
Previous Classification: CONFIDENTIAL
Previous Handling Restrictions: n/a
Reference: n/a
Retention: 0
Review Action: RELEASED, APPROVED
Review Content Flags:
Review Date: 25 may 2005
Review Event:
Review Exemptions: n/a
Review Media Identifier:
Review Release Date: n/a
Review Release Event: n/a
Review Transfer Date:
Review Withdrawn Fields: n/a
SAS ID: 2356601
Secure: OPEN
Status: NATIVE
Subject: ANDREOTTI NAMES ROGNONI TO INTERIOR MINISTRY SUMMARY: IN AN UNEXPECTED MOVE, PRIME MINISTER ANDREOTTI ENDED A POLITICALLY DIFFICULT 34-DAY SEARCH FOR A
TAGS: PINT, IT, (ROGONI, VIRGINIO)
To: STATE
Type: TE
vdkgvkey: odb://SAS/SAS.dbo.SAS_Docs/d16a3289-c288-dd11-92da-001cc4696bcc
Review Markings:
Sheryl P. Walter
Declassified/Released
US Department of State
EO Systematic Review
20 Mar 2014
Markings: Sheryl P. Walter Declassified/Released US Department of State EO Systematic Review 20 Mar 2014